

# Information on **Fifth Disease** (Erythema Infectiosum)



## **What is Fifth Disease?**

A common, usually mild rash illness caused by Human Parvovirus B19.

## **What are the symptoms?**

Mild symptoms (for example headache, body ache, sore throat, low grade fever and chills) may occur before the rash. Usually there is no fever. Frequently there is a rash, especially on the cheeks (slapped-cheek appearance), followed by a *lace-like* rash on the chest, back, arms and legs. The rash fades, but may return and improve or get worse for weeks, especially with exposure to heat, such as sunlight or bathing. Joint pain and swelling of the joints commonly occur in adults and might occur in children. Some people do not have symptoms at all.

## **How is it spread?**

- Respiratory secretions (coughing, sneezing).
- May also spread from mother to developing fetus.

**How long after being infected does a person become sick?** 4-20 days.

## **When can someone with Fifth Disease spread it to others?**

People with Fifth Disease **are most contagious before the rash begins and are probably not contagious after the rash appears**. People with Fifth Disease, diagnosed by a doctor, do not need to be isolated at home and may go to work, school or child care.

## **Who is susceptible?**

Everyone. About half of all adults have had Fifth Disease so they are protected from being infected again.

## **How can the spread of Fifth Disease be prevented?**

- Cover nose and mouth with tissue when coughing and sneezing, then dispose of tissues and wash hands.
- Wash hands with warm water and soap frequently.
- Avoid sharing food, eating utensils, drinking glasses, soda or water bottles.

## **What are the potential problems if a pregnant woman is exposed?**

Fifth Disease infection that occurs during pregnancy can cause fetal death. The risk of fetal death is less than 10% after lab confirmed infection in the first half of pregnancy. In the second half of pregnancy the risk of fetal death is not significant. Birth defects associated with Fifth Disease have not been reported. Pregnant women exposed to Fifth Disease should consult their doctors.

**What is the treatment?** There is no specific treatment.

*If you have questions, please call your doctor or local health department.*

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